



Year in Review

2025 - 2026



**Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel
Humanities Center**

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Growing and deepening our impact



Dear friends and partners of the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Humanities Center,

The 2025–2026 year was a full and vibrant one for the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Humanities Center. Officially, our programs reached more than 2,000 students – from high schoolers in the Mandel Youth Humanities Academy, to Tri-C students in the Mandel Scholars Academy and honors programs, to graduates continuing their education through the Mandel Continuing Scholars Program and the Cleveland Humanities Collaborative.

Unofficially, our impact extended even further. Through our public-facing Mandel Humanities Forums featuring filmmaker **Simone Barros** and social media creator **Alexis Nikole Nelson**; immersive CLEadership experiences; and internship placements with arts, humanities and cultural institutions across Greater Cleveland, the Mandel Humanities Center welcomed Northeast Ohio to Tri-C – and connected our students to Cleveland and beyond.

As you read the stories that follow, I hope you feel as inspired as I do by the dedication, creativity and drive of the Mandel Center’s students, faculty and staff. While we pause to reflect on the past year, we are already looking ahead to an exciting year to come. We will launch a new **Student Success Symposium**, giving students the opportunity to present honors-level academic work to the broader community. This fall, we will host two major public events: a poetry reading by Ohio Poet Laureate **Edward Julian**, and a celebration of the Mandel Center’s 10th anniversary featuring the two-time Grammy Award–winning vocal ensemble **Roomful of Teeth**.

We are also proud to share that the Mandel Humanities Center played a key role in securing two substantial grants this year. The Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Foundation committed \$3 million to **expand the Mandel Youth Humanities Academy** over the next three years; and **Achieving the Dream** has awarded \$150,000 to expand humanities-focused internship opportunities. These grants will help prepare the next generation of civic-minded leaders who think deeply about the human experience.

If you know a student who may be interested in our humanities-centered programs – or an organization eager to partner with us – please reach out. We would love to connect.

Sincerely,

Connie Kassor, Ph.D.
Chair, Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Humanities Center

BY THE NUMBERS

Snapshot of our year

2,000+



Tri-C students engaged in one or more of the Mandel Humanities Center's nine programs

65



Graduates of the Mandel Scholars Academy in academic year 2025-2026

25



Students in the Mandel Continuing Scholars Program transferring with full scholarships to the Mandel Honors College at Cleveland State University

98



CLEadership activities engaging Mandel Scholars in community-based learning in Humanities, Leadership and Civic Engagement

106



Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies certificates awarded since the program was launched

10



Tri-C Phi Theta Kappa members selected for the 2026 All-Ohio Academic Team and receiving scholarships (the most from any community college in Ohio!)

100%



Fall 2026 acceptance rate to Case Western Reserve University for Tri-C students in the Cleveland Humanities Collaborative

525



Attendees at the Spring Mandel Humanities Forum featuring Alexis Nikole Nelson, @blackforager

8



Tri-C Honors students whose presentations were accepted at national conferences

Alumni Spotlight

MANDEL SCHOLAR SVETLANA SANDOVAL PRESENTS AT KAAN CONFERENCE



Tri-C graduate (2025) and Mandel Scholar, **Svetlana Sandoval**, presented at the KAAN Conference held in Atlanta, Georgia from June 20-22. In her session, "Adoption Perspectives from Around the World," Sandoval drew upon both her personal experiences as an international adoptee from Russia, as well as the extensive academic research she did in the Mandel Continuing Scholars program at Tri-C.

Upon returning from the conference, Sandoval remarked: "It was an incredible experience. It was my second time attending the conference but my first time presenting. My session was well received, and I have continued to get feedback from attendees that it was impactful for them!"

When the international adoption industry surged in the U.S. in the 1990s and early 2000s, the KAAN conference began in California in 1998 in an effort to connect and provide support for the first wave of Korean-born adoptees as they reached adulthood.

Over time, the KAAN conference has grown, and today, it brings together adoptees and their loved ones from across the U.S. and the

world. The conference hosts a full three-day schedule of workshops and programs focused on topics of race, identity, family, connections, and current events. In her presentation, Sandoval was joined by Anna Sarkitova, also an international adoptee from Russia. Sandoval has spent the last two years reclaiming her immigrant and adoptee identities and exploring her heritage with the support of the adoptee community.

She reflected, "At the conference, I had an amazing time in community with other leaders and learning from the academics in my field. I also met some scholars whose work I have been citing through my research process, including Dr. SunAh Laybourn. Dr. Laybourn's language of 'critical adoptee knowledge producers' has been in almost every paper I've written. I feel fueled to keep going in my research and to continue documenting the collective wisdom that comes from adoptee knowledge producers!"

The Mandel Humanities Center is proud to support student participation in conferences, enabling students like Sandoval to learn, network and share their work beyond the classroom.

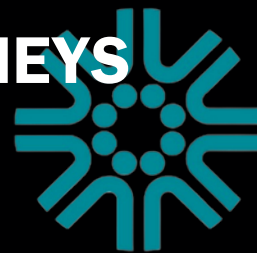
Update:



Sandoval is currently enrolled in the Mandel Honors College at Cleveland State University, pursuing her bachelor's degree in social work. She has also joined the team at Adoption Network Cleveland as a Program Coordinator and will be returning to the KAAN Conference in 2026 as a plenary speaker.

Welcome new Scholars!

STUDENTS BEGIN THEIR JOURNEYS AS MANDEL SCHOLARS



A new cohort of 60 Tri-C Mandel Scholars got a head start on the Fall 2025 semester when they gathered on Eastern Campus on Friday, Aug. 22 for a lively orientation day. With a promise to avoid boring PowerPoint presentations, the orientation included games and friendly competition, a chance to forge new friendships, and all the essential information a Mandel Scholar needs to be successful in the program.

Tri-C Eastern Campus President **Todd Kitchen** and Mandel Humanities Center Chair **Connie Kassor** welcomed the students and congratulated them on being selected for the Mandel Scholars Academy. To be considered for this collegewide program, students must have a proven record of academic achievement and leadership potential, as well as an interest in the humanities.

New scholars were joined throughout the day by Mandel faculty members and experienced Mandel Scholars who served as group leaders for the incoming students.



One of the student volunteers, a second-year Mandel Scholar, reflected: "It was an amazing experience to lead and re-see orientation through a different lens. I really tried to focus on making sure everyone in my group felt comfortable and helping them to open up a little. It was also helpful for me to continue to get out of my comfort zone. I know that I can be reserved at times but the experiences that I've had through Mandel have allowed me to really challenge my leadership by speaking up, advocating and using my voice, and being comfortable socializing, networking and conversing with others."



Cleveland Humanities Collaborative Workforce Initiative

TRI-C STUDENTS GAIN EXPERIENCE IN HUMANITIES INTERNSHIPS

The conclusion of the summer included the completion of the Cleveland Humanities Collaborative-sponsored internships. Beginning the second week of June, Tri-C had six CHC-sponsored interns working in three different Cleveland non-profit organizations:

- ICA Art Conservation
- International Women's Air and Space Museum
- All Faiths Pantry

All the site supervisors had very positive feedback to share regarding their experiences hosting the CHC-sponsored interns. The students worked at their intern sites for a minimum of 50 hours and engaged in guided reflection regarding their summer internship experiences.



Cleveland Public Library engages Mandel Scholars as Library Shop Ambassadors



In this pilot partnership, designed as a CHC “micro-internship,” four Mandel Scholars served as volunteers in The Library Shop, Cleveland Public Library’s newest collaborative space. The book-themed shop features Cleveland-made products. It is located directly across the street from the library’s downtown main branch so it’s a space where the library engages with new audiences and members of the community.

Serving as Library Ambassadors, the student interns learned about the library’s role and impact as a civic institution, as well as how libraries are using creative, entrepreneurial strategies to sustain their important missions.

MANDEL HUMANITIES CENTER ANNOUNCES FACULTY FELLOWS

Fellows will lead projects integrating Humanities with Math and Nursing

The Mandel Humanities Center has selected two faculty fellows for the 2025-2026 academic year. This fellowship is awarded to tenured or tenure-track faculty who engage in work that advances the Mandel Center's mission of promoting humanities-focused research that leads to meaningful public engagement. The faculty fellows were announced at Fall 2025 Convocation.

Desiree Sanders, associate professor of nursing, has been awarded a fellowship for her project, "Compassion Isn't Extra: Humanities as Essential Nursing Practice." This project invites beginning nursing students to engage with the humanities through a focus on the lived experiences of elderly residents in long-term care settings.

Jennifer Hirz, associate professor of mathematics, has been awarded a fellowship for her project, "Bridging Numbers and Narratives: Humanizing Math through Service and Story." This project explores the intersection of math and the humanities by embedding reflective, community-based storytelling into a developmental math course, through a partnership with a local elementary school.

Four faculty were also awarded honorable mention recognition for their proposals and will receive research support for their humanities-focused projects: **Miriam Bennett** (film); **Vicky Bonillas** (English); **Casey Sweeney** (English); and **Geza Varhegyi** (biology).



Cleveland Humanities Collaborative hosts "How-To CWRU"



On Aug. 14, Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) hosted a CWRU Registration Workshop for the Tri-C Cleveland Humanities Collaborative (CHC) students and for the Tri-C STEM Pathway and Cross-Registering students.

Jamaal Hill, CWRU CHC program manager, planned a fun-filled, busy morning for the Tri-C students. The day began with a CWRU campus tour, led by a CWRU student double majoring in Asian Studies and Chemistry.

The tour was followed by a "How-To CWRU" presentation led by **Marie Meeks**, associate dean of Transfer Students. After the informative presentation, the students individually met with Meeks to select and register for their CWRU concurrent enrollment courses.

Expanding our programs

YOUTH HUMANITIES ACADEMY TO GROW WITH GRANT FROM JACK, JOSEPH AND MORTON MANDEL FOUNDATION



The Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Foundation has committed \$3 million over the next five years to expand the Mandel Youth Humanities Academy.

This unique pre-college program at Tri-C engages Cleveland-area high school students with the humanities through place-based learning across the city while also helping those students prepare for college and civic life. Launched in 2022 with an initial grant from the Mandel Foundation, the academy has served 114 local high school students to date.

The academy is especially committed to reaching students who are often excluded from traditional pre-college opportunities – those from low-income backgrounds and those with lower academic indicators – by affirming their potential and supporting their growth within a community of like-minded peers. With this grant, the academy will double the number of students served each summer from 30 to 60; expand the year-long public project fellowship; increase community outreach in public schools through teacher partnerships; and create new leadership opportunities for students in the Mandel Scholars Academy.



Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies Certificate

MANDEL CENTER BECOMES TRI-C'S HOME FOR PEACE STUDIES

Tri-C's Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies (CRPS) certificate program has been rehoused from the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences to the Mandel Humanities Center.

Jordan Cottrill joined the Mandel Center in September 2025 to serve as the new program coordinator.

The CRPS certificate program has existed at Tri-C for over 15 years, offering students engaging and hands-on coursework in the field of Conflict Resolution. Students can apply course credits toward transfer to a four-year institution, or earn the certificate without being enrolled in a degree program.



Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies

Certificate Program

Program Details: CRPS Certificate



The CRPS certificate involves six required courses: three elective requirements and three peace studies-specific classes.

Students are able to choose their elective coursework from a list of classes in peace studies-related disciplines (e.g., psychology, philosophy, humanities, sociology), many of which will already be completed when pursuing an associate of arts or science degree. The peace studies courses (listed in the course catalog as POL 2020, 2041, and 2140) include an introduction to conflict resolution, a practical application class and a service-learning capstone requirement.

Eligible students can earn scholarships toward completing each of the three peace studies courses.

CHRONICLE VIRTUAL FORUM

The Growing Role of the Humanities at Community Colleges

THE CHRONICLE
OF HIGHER EDUCATION

September 10, 2025

With
Support
FromTHE TEAGLE
FOUNDATION

Humanities + Community Colleges

DR. KASSOR REPRESENTS TRI-C IN CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION FORUM

Could community colleges be the future of humanities education?

This provocative question was the topic of discussion at a virtual forum hosted by *The Chronicle of Higher Education* with support from the Teagle Foundation.

Dr. **Connie Kassor**, chair of the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Humanities Center, was one of four panelists invited to speak at the Sept. 10 forum. She joined colleagues from Austin, Rose State and Frederick community colleges on the panel, titled “The Growing Role of the Humanities at Community Colleges.”

Showcasing Tri-C’s Mandel Scholars Academy as a model, Kassor argued that community colleges are uniquely positioned to harness the power of the humanities by integrating it with other academic disciplines, as well as traditional career and technical pathways. Mandel Scholars – whether they study business, nursing, IT, political science, or any number of other disciplines – engage in a unique humanities

curriculum that helps them connect their fields to broader human questions. “Our students become the biggest advocates for the humanities,” she explained.

Kassor emphasized the direct link between humanities education and career readiness:

“Collectively, we need to do a better job at connecting humanities coursework and workforce preparation. [A humanities education] is not ‘in addition to’; it’s an essential component of workforce preparation,” Kassor explained, citing the skills of critical thinking, navigating complex ideas and differing perspectives, and more that students learn from the humanities.

Moderator

Ian Wilhelm
Deputy Managing Editor,
The Chronicle of Higher Education

Panelists

Ted Hadzi-Antich Jr.
Associate Professor, Government,
Austin Community College,
Executive Director, The Great
Questions Foundation

Connie Kassor
Chair, Jack, Joseph and Morton
Mandel Humanities Center,
Cuyahoga Community College

Emily Stacey
Program Coordinator and
Professor of Political Science,
Rose State College

Brian Stipelman
Dean of Arts and Humanities,
Frederick Community College,
Board Member, Community
College Humanities Association

The Growing Role of the
Humanities at Community Colleges



Leadership in Action

MANDEL SCHOLARS EXPLORE CLEVELAND THROUGH CIVIC LEADERSHIP RETREAT

The Mandel Humanities Center is collaborating with the **Cleveland Leadership Center (CLC)** to offer a series of civic leadership experiences to Mandel Scholars. Inspired by CLC's **Campus Cleveland** program, this partnership aims to deepen Mandel Scholars' connection to the community while cultivating their civic engagement and leadership skills.

An energized group of 65 Mandel Scholars gathered at the main branch of the Cleveland Public Library for a full day of leadership development activities on Friday, Oct. 3.

The day included a mix of leadership skill development, team building activities, roundtable discussions with community leaders, a downtown Cleveland scavenger hunt and visioning activities for the upcoming year.

Mandel Scholar **Harry Anderson** reflected, "I have participated in multiple leadership retreats and experiences, yet they were lacking a major component. This Civic Leadership Retreat allowed us to practice leadership skills within a real-world context. During our Cleveland scavenger hunt, I saw my team genuinely begin to shine as their leadership approaches came to life. It is incredible how our skills start to show outside of a classroom."

Student **Stefanie Wims** concurred, "I learned you don't have to be at the forefront in order to lead. The retreat gave me new insight on the city I grew up in and taught me productive ways to interact with different types of leaders."



National Model

NATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD CELEBRATES 10 YEARS OF MANDEL HUMANITIES CENTER

On Oct. 15-16, the Mandel Humanities Center welcomed its National Advisory Board for its annual meeting. This eight-member board, composed of distinguished local and national leaders, met with the Center's staff to offer strategic guidance, share feedback and explore opportunities to connect with like-minded organizations in Northeast Ohio and beyond.

Special guests of the meeting included Dr. Michael A. Baston, Dr. Todd Kitchen and representatives from both the Tri-C Foundation and the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Foundation. Attendees heard directly from faculty, students and alumni about how the Mandel Humanities Center is enriching students' educational journeys at Tri-C and beyond. The group also engaged in dynamic conversations about the vital role of humanities education in preparing students for success in all career paths.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Foundation's transformative \$10 million gift to Tri-C, which established the Mandel Humanities Center and the Mandel Scholars Academy. The Honors and Scholars programs administered by the Center continue to empower students to become civic-minded leaders within their communities who have thought deeply about the human experience.

National Advisory Board 2025-2026

Timothy K. Eatman, Ph.D.
Rutgers University-Newark

Ted Hadzi-Antich Jr.
Austin Community College
The Great Questions Project

Michael Jacobs, D.A.
Monroe Community College

Key Jo Lee
Museum of the African Diaspora

Aaron Petersal
Maltz Museum

Anika T. Prather, Ph.D.
Catholic University
Anika Prather Consulting

Robert C. Smith
Cerity Partners

Stephanie Danes Smith
Kent State University



INAUGURAL HUMANITIES FORUM BRINGS TOGETHER “UNLIKELY PARTNERS”

On Thursday, Nov. 13, the Mandel Humanities Center hosted its inaugural Mandel Humanities Forum at Tri-C's Eastern Campus. The event, titled “**Movements, Moss and Movies: Connecting Cleveland Through the Underground Railroad**,” brought together four Ohio-based educators exploring what happens when unlikely partners come together in conversation.

This event marked the beginning of a new series of community programming celebrating the Mandel Humanities Center's 10-year anniversary.

“We are so excited to launch this new initiative,” said Mandel Center Chair **Connie Kassor**. “The Mandel Humanities Forum gives us the opportunity to bring together students, faculty, staff and community members in order to explore big questions about the human experience.”

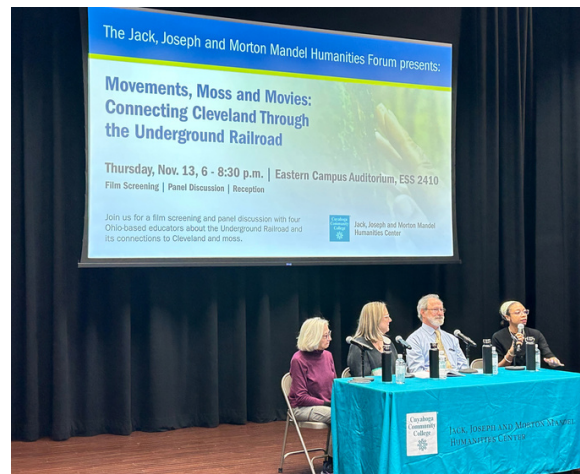
The panelists included:

- **Simone Barros**, filmmaker
- **Jeanne Van Atta**, civil rights educator
- **Elizabeth Hoag**, archaeologist and anthropologist
- **Robert Klips**, bryologist

Special guest **Joan Southgate**, a Cleveland leader and founder of Restore Cleveland Hope, also attended. At 97 years old, Southgate continues to share stories of American freedom seekers and advocates for preserving local history.

Together, the panelists discussed the fascinating ways their individual interests have intersected as they've sought to deepen understanding of Cleveland's history and its connections to the Underground Railroad.

Barros also previewed an excerpt from her upcoming film, *The Dead Will Show You the Way: A Fugue for Moss and Memory*, which portrays Southgate's campaign to save the historic Cozad-Bates House – the only pre-Civil War home in Cleveland – from demolition.



*Honors Program***ARCADE NIGHT**

Friday, Nov. 21 saw some big winners! Tri-C's Honors Program, part of the Mandel Humanities Center, hosted 43 students, friends and family at Arcade Night, an evening of fun at Scene 75 in Brunswick. Students were able to enjoy games, rides, food and friendship.

As one Honors student shared, "Thank you for the invitation! It was really fun, and a great option to spend some time around familiar people in a non-academic atmosphere."



TRI-C AND PARTNERS SHOWCASE TRANSFER PATHWAYS AT AAC&U

Staff and students from Tri-C, Cleveland State University and Case Western Reserve University traveled to Washington, D.C. on Jan. 21 – 23 to participate in the annual meeting of the **American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U)**.

Emily Quayle (Tri-C), **Liz Kravanya** (CSU) and **Jamaal Hill** (CWRU) spoke to attendees about the Mandel Humanities Center and its unique humanities-focused transfer pathways: the Mandel Continuing Scholars program, a partnership with the Mandel Honors College at Cleveland State, and the Cleveland Humanities Collaborative, a partnership with Case.

Tri-C graduates **Jez Lambert** and **Wintana Teklit** presented their own perspectives as transfer students who are currently thriving at four-year institutions as a result of these programs. Mandel Center Chair **Connie Kassor** and current Mandel Scholar **Brianna Arnold** also attended the conference.

The AAC&U is a global membership organization dedicated to advancing the

democratic purposes of higher education by promoting equity, innovation and excellence in liberal education. The annual meeting brought together more than 5,000 attendees from hundreds of institutions across the country. Tri-C was one of only five community colleges represented in the official programming.

Incoming AAC&U board Chair and President of Bunker Hill Community College Pam Eddinger applauded Tri-C's efforts and called for greater community college involvement in organizations like the AAC&U. She pointed out that nearly 45% of undergraduates in the US are community college students and said that "the time is right to amplify the critical place of the liberal arts at our community colleges."



Continuing Scholars Program

BUILDING COMMUNITY ACROSS CAMPUSES

A strong sense of community has always been at the heart of the Mandel experience. Throughout the 2025–2026 academic year, students in the Mandel Continuing Scholars Program came together through a variety of events designed to strengthen connections between students in the program’s Tri-C and Cleveland State University cohorts.

Since 2018, the program has intentionally created opportunities for students at every stage of the transfer pathway to build relationships. “Recognizing the challenges inherent in maintaining this sense of community in a program for students attending two different institutions, the Mandel Continuing Scholars Program has made it a priority to ensure that students have meaningful opportunities to connect,” said **Emily Quayle**, program manager.

Many students speak warmly of the friendships, support and belonging forged through shared curricular experiences, participation in co-curricular CLEadership activities, educational travel and social events.

This year’s community-building events for the Continuing Scholars included:

- Museum of Illusions
- Cleveland Monsters hockey game
- Friendsgiving (cultural exchange) potluck at Cleveland State University
- End of semester leadership luncheon
- NRHC conference in New Haven, CT
- Tour of Yale University
- Cleveland Cavaliers basketball game
- Open vehicle safari at The Wilds
- FIFA World Cup soccer match, Brazil v. Egypt
- Cleveland Guardians baseball game
- Cooking class with Stir!
- Cleveland Orchestra with Idina Menzel at Blossom
- The Lion King* at Playhouse Square



The City is Our Classroom

Extending classroom learning into the community through experiential learning is a key feature of the Mandel Humanities Center's programming.

In the Mandel Scholars Academy, these community-based learning experiences are called “CLEadership” activities and are designed for Scholars to engage with the Mandel Center's pillars of Humanities, Leadership and Civic Engagement, not just in their coursework but also in the world.

One of our students said it best: “The city is our classroom!”



Cleveland Food Bank tour and “Young Professionals Networking Luncheon”



Spring Break trip to New York City to examine the mythologies of the “NYC Fairytale”

The City is Our Classroom *continued*



Poetry workshop with Literary Cleveland at Rockefeller Greenhouse, part of annual Cleveland Poetry Festival



Cleveland Public Theatre for a performance and artist talk-back, *Into the Heart of One Star*



Discovering the intersections of philosophy and woodworking at Soulcraft community makerspace



Manet & Morisot at Cleveland Museum of Art, guided by curator Dr. Heather Lemonedes Brown



Asking "How is 'nature' constructed in the Midwest?" at moCa's *Ohio Now: State of Nature* exhibition, featuring works of art by Ohio artists focused on sustainability



Exploring "The Bias Inside Us" community engagement project, developed by the Smithsonian and on view at the Maltz Museum

WHAT IS ART?

Spring cohort of Mandel Scholars explores big questions at new student orientation



Spontaneous white-out conditions and blustery cold weather did not deter students, faculty and staff from attending the Mandel Scholars Academy New Student Orientation on Friday, Jan. 23 at the **Cleveland Museum of Art**. Twenty-seven new Mandel Scholars immersed themselves in their first CLEadership activity as part of orientation. The morning started with a breakfast meeting where Mandel staff, faculty and second semester Mandel students were introduced, program expectations were reviewed, and student program contracts were signed.

The program quickly turned to a dynamic discussion led by Professors **Luke Schlueter** and **Brian Johnson** on the topic “What is a Work of Art?” Following the discussion, students divided into two groups and toured the museum with CMA professionals who continued the discussion. After the tour, students, staff and faculty had lunch while getting to know each other and forming personal connections – the primary goal of the new student orientation.

When asked for feedback, second semester Mandel Scholar **Sofi Candow**, who

volunteered as a student-leader, shared, “I loved how the presentation by our professors quickly led into an open discussion for everyone to engage and share original opinions. I think that this experience was very fun and a sneak peek at how the Mandel Scholars Academy and CLEadership activities run. Overall, I love any opportunity to share my knowledge and be a peer mentor/leader, so I had a wonderful time. I also want to share how much I love this group and all of the amazing chances we get to learn and grow.”





Asking Big Questions

MANDEL YOUTH HUMANITIES ACADEMY HOLDS ITS THIRD ANNUAL, “EXPLORING THE HUMANITIES” EVENT

How do people view me? What makes me feel alive? Where will I be in five years?

These were some of the questions students asked on Friday, Feb. 20 during the opening activity of the Mandel Youth Humanities Academy's third annual “Exploring the Humanities” gathering.

This year's event welcomed nearly 150 students from 10 area high schools for a day of interactive sessions in the humanities that included Tri-C faculty-led workshops on film, photography, virtual reality, poetry, memoir, sociology and art.

After returning from their workshops, students were invited to revisit the opening prompt. This time, their questions went deeper. *What is art? What makes something beautiful? What is equality? What is my role in helping others? What is truth in the age of generative AI?*

In reflecting on the day, students themselves pointed to the shift in their questions as evidence that the humanities provided tools for thinking that reach far beyond a single workshop or classroom. That message was reinforced during this year's alumni panel, where former participants shared their

enthusiasm for the program and described how spending the summer engaged with the humanities shaped their current and long-term educational paths.

The annual event is part of the Mandel Youth Humanities Academy's broader community outreach effort to increase student engagement with the humanities at the Mandel Humanities Center while exposing them to Tri-C faculty and potential college pathways.

In three years, the event has doubled its size, both in partner schools and number of attendees. Just as importantly, the model has been effective in attracting interest to the Mandel Youth Humanities Academy. Based on data from previous years, approximately 20% of attendees subsequently apply to the summer academy.

Dr. David Busch, program manager, remarked, “The annual summit demonstrates how intentional humanities outreach can provide new learning experiences for young people across Northeast Ohio while also strengthening school partnerships and positioning Tri-C as a hub for applied humanities learning.”

TRI-C STUDENTS ATTEND NORTHEAST REGIONAL HONORS COUNCIL CONFERENCE

On Thursday, Mar. 26, eight Tri-C students traveled to New Haven, Connecticut for the annual Northeast Regional Honors Council (NRHC) conference. Guided by the conference theme, “The Haven of Honors,” the students explored New Haven and Yale University; attended workshops, presentations and poster sessions; and listened to civically engaged students and speakers.

Three Tri-C students presented their research:

- Honors Program Fellow and Cleveland Humanities Collaborative student **Taylor Chapotelle** presented “Distorted Vision: How Misrepresentation and Accurate Portrayals in Art Drive Social Change.”
- **Harry Anderson**, Mandel Scholars Academy student, led a roundtable discussion on “Ethnography: The Intersection of the Humanities and Scientific Research.”
- Mandel Scholar and Tri-C Honors student **Joyce Tagne** won an honorable mention award for her poster “When Leaders Dance: Moving Together, Leading Together.”

Frank Gagy, first time NRHC attendee, stated, “NRHC was a warm and welcoming experience as a first-time attendee. The most important thing about the conference was meeting new people that are passionate about their work, and some projects were even thought-provoking.”



“Having attended two NRHCs in a row, I love how I’ve become exposed to fascinating topics and inquiries I’ve never considered before, met and interacted with amazing people, and had fun exploring a new city. I’ve built and strengthened connections with staff and students from other community colleges, and from fellow travelers at Tri-C. Wonderful opportunity.”

-Marcella Moore, Mandel Scholar



Tri-C students also had the opportunity to connect with Tri-C alumni attending Cleveland State University. The following Tri-C Mandel Continuing Scholar alumni presented at NRHC:

- **Carrie Ann Campbell** (Tri-C 2024) – “Redefining the Redline: Exclusion, Crisis and Hope”
- **Gabriele Borges de Oliveira** (Tri-C 2024) – “Environmental Impact of Data Center in Ohio: Can Nature Keep Up with the Demand of Information?”
- **Ayla Koslen** (Tri-C 2025) – “Our View of Justice: Punishing Crime and Preventing Recidivism”
- **Jessica Cavalier** (Tri-C 2025) – “Charter Schools: A Way to Find Voices and Claim Communities”
- **Klemans Husary** (Tri-C 2024) – “Examining the Cellular Response when Adaptation to ER Stress Fails”
- **Jez Lambert** (Tri-C 2024) – “Historiography of Quarantine During the Bubonic Plague in Early Modern Europe”



ALEXIS NIKOLE NELSON DRAWS CROWD AT SPRING HUMANITIES FORUM

Community event featuring social media influencer connects humanities and nature

The Mandel Humanities Center welcomed popular author and environmentalist **Alexis Nikole Nelson**, known online as @blackforager, for its Spring 2026 Mandel Humanities Forum on Apr. 16. More than 500 guests from Tri-C and across the Greater Cleveland community attended the free event to hear Nelson's talk, "Foraging a Sense of Place."

"People say there is no connection between science and the arts," Nelson told the crowd, "But I am a very loud piece of proof that *that* isn't true!"

Nelson, an Ohioan herself who studied theater and environmental science in college, highlighted how the humanities contribute to our understanding of the natural world and the places we call home. In foraging, she encouraged asking not only *What is this and can I eat it?* but also *Where did this come from?*, *How did it get here?*, and *For whom does this plant feel like home?*

Nelson uses her platform to educate her seven million followers on collecting,

identifying and eating wild food. She was named one of *TIME* magazine's top 100 creators in 2025, won a James Beard award in 2022 and is the author of a forthcoming cookbook, *Happy Snacking, Don't Die!*

Dr. **Connie Kassor**, chair of the Mandel Center explained, "This event was one of the highlights of the year for the Mandel Humanities Center. Nelson's visit provided an opportunity to showcase the ways that the humanities are important for all of us — not just at Tri-C, but across Northeast Ohio more broadly."

After the event, guests stayed on to enjoy food and fellowship, as well as to learn more about Tri-C's Plant Sciences and Honors and Scholars programs.

Nelson's appearance at Tri-C was part of a two-day engagement that the Mandel Humanities Center hosted in partnership with the Rust Belt Humanities Lab at Ursuline College.

HONORS STUDENTS NAMED TO 2026 ALL-OHIO ACADEMIC TEAM

*Awards recognize excellence in academics,
leadership and community service*



PHI THETA KAPPA
HONOR SOCIETY

On Thursday, Apr. 23, four Tri-C students traveled to Columbus to be recognized at the 2026 All-Ohio Academic Team ceremony and luncheon hosted by the Ohio Association of Community Colleges (OACC) and in collaboration with Phi Theta Kappa.

The All-Ohio Academic Team program provides statewide recognition and scholarships to outstanding community college students. This year's event honored 52 students from across Ohio. Of these students, 10 attend Tri-C. Students are nominated by their college for consideration. Students must have a minimum GPA of 3.5 and demonstrate community service, college involvement, academic successes and honors as well as write a personal essay.

All 10 Tri-C students selected for the All-Ohio Academic Team participate in the college's Honors Program, and nine are members of Phi Theta Kappa honors society. Both are programs of the Mandel Humanities Center.



Tri-C students in attendance included:

- **Marcella Moore**, 1st Team, Transfer Pathway, Eastern Campus \$1,000
- **Verona Mahilet**, 2nd Team, Transfer Pathway, Metropolitan Campus \$500
- **Mona Shaban**, 3rd Team, Transfer Pathway, Westshore Campus \$250
- **Chris Wise**, 3rd Team, Transfer Pathway, Westshore Campus \$250

Students received a medal, certificate and scholarship check. After the formal presentation, representatives for Ohio's elected officials also presented students with certificates commemorating their accomplishment.

Students also recognized but not in attendance included:

- **Harry Anderson**, 3rd Team, Transfer Pathway, Eastern Campus \$250
- **Aniya Alex**, 3rd Team, Workforce Pathway, Metropolitan Campus \$250
- **Victoria Kovalsky**, 3rd Team, Transfer Pathway, Metropolitan Campus \$250
- **Taylor Confer**, 3rd Team, Transfer Pathway, Western Campus \$250
- **Alexis Hurchanik**, 3rd Team, Transfer Pathway, Western Campus \$250
- **Tuan Khoi Phan**, 3rd Team, Workforce Pathway, Western Campus \$250



Travel opportunities

ECO-HUMANITIES: EXPLORING CLIMATE, CULTURE AND COMMUNITY IN NEW ORLEANS

After a semester in Professor Casandra Sweeney's "Eco-Humanities & Literature" course, an adventurous group of six Mandel Scholars traveled to New Orleans, Louisiana to learn firsthand how a changing climate has shaped the city's landscapes, communities and efforts towards a sustainable future.

"Our week in New Orleans immersed students in Eco-Humanities through cultural history, environmental exploration and community-based learning," Dr. Sweeney explained.

Moving through sites like Preservation Hall, the Presbytère Museum, Whitney Plantation, and the 9th Ward, students encountered the city as a living text shaped by colonial legacies, racialized geographies and climate vulnerability. Ecological engagement, from volunteering at Grow Dat Youth Farm and Green Light New Orleans to exploring the bayou and visiting Sankofa Wetland Park, connected the course concepts to the lived realities of environmental justice and community resilience.

Across these experiences, students witnessed how culture, memory and advocacy intersect in New Orleans through the artistic storytelling of Studio B and the Petite Jazz Museum and the stark environmental injustices visible in the Ninth Ward and Cancer Alley.

Guided reflection throughout the week helped students synthesize ecological awareness with humanistic inquiry, offering an interdisciplinary understanding of New Orleans as a place where history, climate change, race, culture and community action converge.





Onward!

CELEBRATING OUR MANDEL SCHOLARS ACADEMY GRADUATES

On May 12, the Mandel Humanities Center held a special ceremony to recognize and celebrate the 65 students graduating from the Mandel Scholars Academy in academic year 2025-2026.

Among the four-year schools that some of this year's graduates are transferring to are: Cleveland State University, University of Akron, Case Western Reserve University, Kent State University, Ohio University, John Carroll University, and Bowling Green University.



Student speakers Mariam Khalil and Adonai Hawkins-Prather delivered inspiring and reflective messages to their peers



LOOKING AHEAD

Upcoming events for academic year 2026 - 2027

AUGUST 14

Mandel Humanities Center Picnic

By invitation only; for prospective and current students, alumni, staff, and faculty

SEPTEMBER 17

An Evening with Ohio Poet

Laureate Edward A. Julian, Sr.

Open to the public; Simon and Rose Mandel Theatre

OCTOBER 8

Mandel Humanities Forum: Celebrating 10 years of the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Humanities Center, featuring *Roomful of Teeth*

Open to the public; Simon and Rose Mandel Theatre

NOVEMBER 9

Phi Theta Kappa Induction Ceremony

By invitation only; Tri-C Metro Campus

DECEMBER 4

Student Success Symposium

Open to the public; Mandel Humanities Center

FEBRUARY 19

Mandel Youth Humanities Academy: Exploring the Humanities Summit

For high school sophomores and juniors, Mandel Humanities Center

APRIL TBD

Mandel Youth Humanities Academy: Exploring the Humanities Summit

For high school seniors, Mandel Humanities Center

APRIL 30

Student Success Symposium

Open to the public; Mandel Humanities Center

MAY 10

Mandel Scholars Academy Graduation Ceremony

For Mandel Scholars and guests; Tri-C Eastern Campus

For more information, visit

www.tri-c.edu/mandel



**Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel
Humanities Center**